DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 961 PS 010 760

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TITLE The Biological Imperative of Play: Form and Function in Primates and Other Animals.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the National Conference on the Vital Role of Play in Learning, Development and Survival (1st, April, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attachment Behavior; *Culture; *Mothers; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Role; *Play; Psychology

ABSTRACT

This presentation underscores the importance of play and outlines a theory of play in terms of ego-psychology and a broadly defined concept of culture. Play is described as the royal road to the collective ego called "culture." At the same time play also enables aspects and parts of culture to be changed. While children should be encouraged to learn through playfulness (curiosity, spontaneity and hands-on involvement with fascinating objects and materials), such playfulness can come about only if the player is given both leeway and limits. The importance of a mother's playful interaction with her child is emphasized. (Author/RH)

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THE BIOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE OF PLAY: FORM AND FUNCTION IN PRIMATES AND OTHER ANIMALS

Maria W. Piers

THE RAPID ADVANCE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES DURING THE PAST FIVE CENTURIES OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION SEEMED TO MANY PEOPLE A MIXED BLESSING. IT WAS, FOR INSTANCE, EXPERIENCED AS A BLOW TO THE SELF-ESTEEM OF MANKIND WHEN IT TURNED OUT THAT THE SUN DOES NOT REVOLVE AROUND US. QUITE THE CONTRARY, IT IS OUR PLANET WHO IS RUNNING AROUND THE SUN. IT WAS EQUALLY DISCONCERTING TO FIND THAT THERE WERE CREATURES ALL OVER THE WORLD WHO WERE NEITHER CHRISTIAN NOR WHITE, YET THEY REGARDED THEMSELVES AS PEOPLE--JUST LIKE US. AND INDEED THAT PROVED TO BE TRUE. THEN THERE WAS SIGMUND FREUD, WHO FOUND THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS, EVEN CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY AND COLLEGE PROFESSORS, HAVE AN UNCONSCIOUS, I.E., A PART OF OUR MIND THAT ESCAPES OUR CONTROL, WORSE THAN THAT, IT RUNS OUR LIVES. THEN THERE WAS ERIK ERIKSON, WHO SHOWED THAT EVEN OUR MOST BRILLIANT AND UNIQUE IDEAS WERE NOT EXCLUSIVELY OUR INDIVIDUAL BRAINCHILDREN, BUT WERE INESCAPABLY SHAPED BY THE CULTURE WE HAPPEN TO LIVE IN. ALL THIS WAS PAINFUL. BUT THE MAN WHOSE FINDINGS PROBABLY DEALT THE WORST BLOW TO OUR NARCISSISM WAS CHARLES DARWIN, THE AUTHOR OF THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES. HE CLAIMED THAT WE, THE GLORIOUS HUMAN RACE, ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF APELIKE CREATURES.

WE ULTIMATELY HAD TO ACCEPT, HOWEVER RELUCTANTLY, DARWIN'S AS WELL AS THE OTHERS' INSULTS. BUT EVER SINCE WE HAVE BEEN LYING

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AWAKE NIGHTS TRYING TO THINK OF WAYS THAT WOULD DISTINGUISH US--REALLY DISTINGUISH US--FROM OUR SIMIAN ANCESTORS. IN THIS EFFORT WE EXAMINED SEVERAL OF THE GREAT HUMAN ACHIEVEMENTS.

FOR A WHILE WE HOPED THAT ONLY WE HAD LANGUAGE, I.E., THAT WE WERE THE ONLY ONES CAPABLE OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE HELP OF SYMBOLS, INSTEAD OF MERELY WITH SCREAMS OF JOY, ANGUISH, PASSION, OR RAGE. BUT, LO AND BEHOLD, WE FOUND THAT SOME ANIMALS ALSO HAVE A LANGUAGE. WORSE YET, HORSES, DOGS, PORPOISES, CHIMPS ARE PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF LEARNING OUR--THE HUMAN--LANGUAGES, AND OUR NUMBERS CONCEPTS AS WELL. AND IT DOESN'T EVEN SEEM ANY HARDER FOR THEM THAN IT IS FOR US TO LEARN SANSKRIT OR SWITZERDEUTSCH.

THEN WE THOUGHT THAT WE, THE CREATURES WHO LIVE BY MIXMASTERS AND MOTORCYCLES, ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO USE TOOLS. BUT THIS PROVED INCORRECT. WE FOUND THAT CHIMPANZEES CAN USE TOOLS, AND THEY ARE EVEN CLEVER ENOUGH TO FASHION THEM (KÖHLER, GROSS, GOODALL). THEY ARE SIMIAN "TOOL AND DIE MAKERS." THEN, FOR A WHILE WE WERE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT ONLY WE WERE ABLE TO ORGANIZE INTO COMPLEX GROUPS FOR THE PURPOSES OF DEFENSE, MUTUAL AID, JOINT WELFARE CONCERNS, ETC.; THAT ONLY WE WERE CAPABLE OF ESTABLISHING LAW AND ORDER. BUT THAT IS WHERE WE WERE DEAD WRONG. ANIMALS, IT TURNED OUT, HAVE COMPLEX SOCIETIES--AND NOT ONLY FOR DEFENDING THEIR TERRITORY BUT, AS GOODALL HAS RECENTLY DESCRIBED, FOR INVADING OTHER GROUPS' TERRITORY AS WELL. THEY KNOW WARFARE.

SO WE HAD TO ADMIT IT: ANIMALS LOWER THAN WE ARE CAN SPEAK, COUNT, CAN USE AS WELL AS FASHION TOOLS, BAND TOGETHER IN SOCIAL STRUCTURES, ATTACK OTHERS--AND PERHAPS CALL IT SELF-DEFENSE. THEY ARE PROBABLY FAMILIAR WITH THE PRINCIPLE WHICH A LITTLE THREE-YEAR-OLD

GIRL EXEMPLIFIED WHEN SHE ATTACKED ANOTHER THREE-YEAR-OLD AND THEN EXPLAINED, "I HAD TO HIT HER BACK FIRST." THERE IS, THEN, A GREAT DEAL IN THE EGO (EGO IS SHORTHAND FOR ALL LEARNED BEHAVIOR) OF HIGHER ANIMALS THAT WE FIND BOTH SOBERINGLY AND DISQUIETINGLY SIMILAR TO OUR OWN. SOME ASPECTS OF THOSE ANIMALS' EGO ARE, ON THE OTHER HAND, REASSURING TO US. WHY THAT? BECAUSE OTHER ANIMALS' SKILLS LAG FAR BEHIND THE HUMAN ONES. JUST THINK OF AN APE STRIPPING LEAVES OFF A TWIG FOR THE PURPOSE OF FERRETING OUT DELICIOUS TERMITES, AND COMPARE THE TWIG WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF A MIXMASTER. OR WATCH A ROVING TROOP OF CHIMPANZEES AND THEN LOOK AT SUCH INTRICATE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AS CORPORATIONS, LABOR UNIONS, OR UNIVERSITIES. ABOVE ALL, COMPARE THE LIMITED VOCABULARY OF AN APE WITH THE INCREDIBLE RICHNESS OF ANY HUMAN LANGUAGE. WHAT ALL THIS MEANS IS THAT HIGHER ANIMALS DO HAVE AN "EGO," ALL RIGHT. THEY DON'T LIVE EXCLUSIVELY BY BUILT-IN PATTERNS, BUT ALSO BY THEIR LEARNED SKILLS. BUT THESE SKILLS ARE MEAGER AND INSUFFICIENT FOR THEIR SURVIVAL. NOT THAT IT MATTERS MUCH TO THEM, FOR, LUCKILY, THESE BUILT-IN PATTERNS ARE STRONG AND ENSURE THEIR SURVIVAL FOR QUITE A WHILE. OURS, THE HUMAN SITUATION, IS VASTLY DIFFERENT. IF WE HAD TO RELY ON BUILT-IN PATTERNS, AS BABY CHICKENS DO, WE WOULD PERISH ALMOST AT BIRTH. IF WE WANT TO STAY ALIVE WE HAVE TO LEARN AND LEARN AND THEN LEARN SOME MORE. IT IS LUCKY THAT WE ARE INDEED ABLE TO DO SO, FOR EVERY HUMAN INFANT IS BORN INTO A CULTURE (THERE IS NO CHILD OUTSIDE OF A CULTURE) AND LEARNING MEANS TO BE INDUCTED INTO ONE'S PARTICULAR CULTURE. BEING BORN INTO A CULTURE, THAT IS INDEED A HUMAN PREROGATIVE, PERHAPS THE ONLY ONE THAT REALLY DISTINGUISHES US FROM OTHER CREATURES.

BUT, WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CULTURE?

WHAT IS A CULTURE?

LEANING ON KROEBER, MALINOWSKI, KLUCKHOHN, ALSO ON FREUD, R. E. WHITE, E. H. ERIKSON AND OTHERS, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT CULTURE IS THE EGO OF A COHESIVE GROUP; THE COLLECTIVE EGO OF SUCH A GROUP. NO MORE AND NO LESS. OR, TO PUT IT IN DIFFERENT WORDS: CULTURE IS A BODY OF TOOLS, OBJECTS, SKILLS, BELIEFS, KNOWLEDGE, LAWS AND CUSTOMS WHICH ARE BEING PASSED ON (AS A TRADITION) TO THE NEXT GENERATION, AND THE NEXT AND THE NEXT. NO OTHER ANIMAL HAS SUCH A TRADITION OF SURVIVAL OBJECTS AND STRATEGIES. ONLY WE HAVE ONE. THE ADVANTAGE, THEN, WHICH EVERY HUMAN CHILD HAS, OVER ALL ANIMAL CHILDREN, IS THAT HE FALLS HEIR TO WHAT HIS ANCESTORS HAVE LEARNED. FOR EVERY HUMAN CHILD THERE IS A CULTURE (I.E., A COLLECTIVE EGO) WAITING AT BIRTH; A CULTURE WHICH ENCOMPASSES A GREAT DEAL OF THE FINDINGS AND THINKING OF MANY GENERATIONS BEFORE HIM AND OF CULTURES OTHER THAN HIS OWN AS WELL. THE HUMAN CHILD IS LUCKY IN THAT HE NEVER HAS TO INVENT THE WHEEL, BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN DONE FOR HIM AND BEFORE HIM. ON THE OTHER HAND, EVERY GENERATION, EVERY SINGLE CHILD CHANGES WHATEVER WHEEL HAS BEEN PASSED ON TO HIM, BE THE CHANGE EVER SO SLIGHT. JUST THINK OF IT: DURING THE COURSE OF A FEW THOUSAND YEARS GENERATIONS OF "CHILDREN" GREW UP AND TRANSFORMED THE CHARIOT WHEEL INTO A STEERING WHEEL, A COG WHEEL, AND THEN SOME. AS WE SAID, CULTURE IS PASSED ON FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT. IT CHANGES CONTINUALLY, YET IT IS THE SAME. JUST AS EVERY PERSON'S IDENTITY CHANGES CONTINUALLY, YET EVERY ONE OF US IS THE SELFSAME PERSON HE WAS YESTERDAY AND WILL BE TOMORROW.

THE REASON WHY WE CAN PASS ON THE TREASURE OF MANY CULTURES ~~_____~~ IS THAT WE, THE HUMAN RACE, HAVE FOUND A WAY OF LAYING DOWN IN SYMBOLS WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED. WE CAN DRAW AND WRITE. WE INFORM THOSE WHO WILL COME AFTER US--BY WAY OF CAVE-PAINTINGS, SAND-PAINTINGS, PAPYRUS AND MICROFICHE AND XEROX COPIES--OF WHAT HAS BEEN FOUND, THOUGHT, BELIEVED, AND USED.

THIS AND THIS ALONE, THE CULTURE, I.E., THE COLLECTIVE EGO THAT CAN BE PASSED ON FOREVER, TRULY AND DECISIVELY SETS US APART FROM OTHER ANIMALS. <u>WE, AND ONLY WE, HAVE FOUND A WAY OF STORING THE EGO</u>.

BECAUSE OF THIS FACT THAT HUMAN BEINGS INVENTED WRITTEN AND DRAWN SYMBOLS WE HAVE ACCESS TO THE TREMENDOUSLY RICH BODY OF EXPERIENCE, HYPOTHESES AND FINDINGS OF COUNTLESS GENERATIONS ON ALL CONTINENTS: THE ASSYRIANS, THE ESKIMOS, THE NORMANS, THE CHINESE, AND EVERYBODY ELSE.

LEST WE, HOWEVER, GET CARRIED AWAY BY OUR ENTHUSIASM FOR CULTURAL RICHES, LET US REMIND OURSELVES THAT THE SUM TOTAL OF EGOS OF THE HUMAN RACE, AS IS STORED IN THE SMITHSONIAN, THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, AND COUNTLESS OTHER PLACES ALL OVER THE WORLD, HAS NOT ONLY GREATLY INCREASED OUR SURVIVAL SKILLS BUT ALSO OUR DESTRUCTIVE SKILLS.

YOU MAY BEGIN TO WONDER ABOUT MY PRESENTATION. HERE I HAVE TALKED FOR FIVE MINUTES OR LONGER AND HAVE NOT EVEN MENTIONED THE WORD "PLAY." WHERE, THEN, DOES PLAY FIT IN?

IT IS NECESSARY AT THIS POINT THAT WE SAY WHAT, EXACTLY, WE MEAN BY "PLAY." IT IS <u>NOT</u> A USELESS PASTIME. IT IS <u>NOT</u> RESERVED

FOR CHILDREN OR THE LEISURE CLASS, OR THE UNEMPLOYED, OR THE STOCKBROKER OR THE SCREEN ACTOR. IT'S FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE AND THEN SOME. IT IS EVERY HUMAN BEING'S ESTATE. AND WHEN WE AS DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGISTS TALK ABOUT PLAY WE MEAN AN INFANT'S PLAY WITH HIS TOES AS WELL AS A PRESCHOOLER WHO PLAYS NURSE, FIREMAN, ASTRONAUT, DRESSMAKER, DOCTOR OR GARAGE MECHANIC; WE ARE TALKING ABOUT BOARD GAMES, COUNTING GAMES, RACES AND COMPETITIVE SPORTS; AND PLAYING THE MARKET, AND STAGE PLAYS, AND SEXUAL FOREPLAY AND GAMES OF WAR AND GAMES OF FORTUNE, AND ABOVE ALL WE MEAN PLAYING WITH THOUGHTS, PLANS, IDEAS. EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING THAT SPELLS GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH AND MASTERING OURSELVES AND THE WORLD, TRYING TO SOLVE VARIOUS PROBLEMS IN VARIOUS WAYS, EXPERIMENTING WITH OPTIONS, PRACTICING DIFFERENT ROLES, STANCES, ATTITUDES. PLAY PREPARES US FOR THE FUTURE.

IN SHORT: PLAY IS THE EGO FOREVER IN STATU NASCENDII. AND AS SUCH PLAY IS THE ROYAL ROAD TO THE COLLECTIVE EGO WHICH WE CALL CULTURE; THE ROYAL ROAD TO THAT WHICH HAS BEEN PASSED ON TO US FOR GENERATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME PLAY ENABLES US TO CHANGE ASPECTS AND PARTS OF THIS CULTURE.

AS WE ARE DESCRIBING THE FUNCTION OF PLAY IT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR THAT WE ARE NOT ABOUT TO THEREBY DENIGRATE THE FUNCTION OF SCHOOL TEACHERS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE TEACHER IS THE PERSON WHO INITIATES EXPERIMENTATION, ROTE LEARNING, PROBLEM-SOLVING, AND ALL THOSE ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE PLAY IN THE BROADEST SENSE: ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE TENTATIVE AT FIRST BUT WHICH LEAD INCREASINGLY TO MASTERY OVER THE ENVIRONMENT AND OVER ONE'S OWN IMPULSES. FOR THE TEACHER MODELS WHAT AN ADULT IS AND DOES; THE TEACHER IS (AFTER THE PARENT)

THE CATALYST NEEDED FOR THE CHILD'S ACCULTURATION. BUT FIRST AND FOREMOST HE/SHE MUST AROUSE A CHILD'S APPETITE FOR KNOWING AND DOING. CURIOSITY IS ESSENTIAL HERE. WITHOUT CURIOSITY A CHILD'S SCHOOL LIFE IS INEFFECTUAL AND STRAINED, AND WHAT HE LEARNS IS NOT LIKELY TO STAY WITH HIM.

AS PIAGET PUTS IT SO APTLY:

> "CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO THEIR OWN EXPERIMENTING AND THEIR OWN RESEARCH. TEACHERS, OF COURSE, CAN GUIDE THEM BY PROVIDING APPROPRIATE MATERIALS, BUT THE ESSENTIAL THING IS THAT IN ORDER FOR A CHILD TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING, HE MUST CONSTRUCT IT HIMSELF, HE MUST RE-INVENT IT. EVERY TIME WE TEACH A CHILD SOMETHING, WE KEEP HIM FROM INVENTING IT HIMSELF. ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT WHICH WE ALLOW HIM TO DISCOVER BY HIMSELF WILL REMAIN WITH HIM VISIBLY . . . FOR ALL THE REST OF HIS LIFE."

THE PIAGETIAN STATEMENT THAT LEARNING IS FIRST AND FOREMOST BASED ON PLAYFULNESS, I.E., CURIOSITY, SPONTANEITY, AND THE DESIRE TO "GET YOUR HANDS" ONTO FASCINATING OBJECTS (SEE BUEHLER, R. W. WHITE, I. HENDRICKS, G. PIERS) HAS BEEN COMPLEMENTED BY ERIKSON'S OBSERVATION THAT SUCH PLAYFULNESS CAN ONLY COME ABOUT IF THE PLAYER IS GIVEN BOTH "LEEWAY AND LIMITS."

IF IN THIS CONNECTION WE THINK OF SOME VAST SURREALISTIC PANORAMA FILLED WITH OBJECTS OF ALL COLORS, SIZES, SHAPES, THEN WE IMMEDIATELY UNDERSTAND THE WISDOM OF ERIKSON'S FORMULA. A CHILD IN THE MIDST OF SUCH A LANDSCAPE WOULD BECOME AS BEWILDERED AND PARALYZED AS IS THE PROVERBIAL CENTIPEDE. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND,

WE PUT A CHILD INTO A BARREN, NARROW ROOM FILLED NOT WITH PUZZLES, DOLLS, BUILDING BLOCKS, BOOKS AND CRAYONS, BUT INSTEAD MERELY WITH DO'S AND DON'T'S, THEN WE STIFLE HIS LUST FOR INTERACTING AND BORE HIM TO DEATH.

PLAY, THEN, THAT IS TRULY EGO BUILDING NEEDS TO BE SPONTANEOUS, IT IS OFTEN A VARIATION ON THE BEHAVIOR OF PERTINENT ADULTS, AND IT NEEDS LEEWAY AS WELL AS LIMITS.

INTERESTINGLY, PIAGET'S AND ERIKSON'S FINDINGS HAVE FOUND A CONFIRMATION IN PRIMATOLOGICAL RESEARCH. THIS IS IT: INFANT CHIMPS ARE ONLY ABLE TO ENGAGE IN FREE PLAY UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THEIR MOTHER AND ON CONDITION THAT THIS MOTHER PLAY WITH THEM. IN THE ABSENCE OF MATERNAL PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION THESE INFANTS ARE EVIDENTLY NOT MOTIVATED TO EXPERIMENT AND IMITATE (WITH VARIATIONS) WHAT THEY HAVE OBSERVED IN THEIR ELDERS. IT IS NOT THAT SUCH INFANTS CANNOT LEARN ADULT CHIMP BEHAVIOR. IF THEY ARE EARLY ORPHANED THEY WILL ATTACH THEMSELVES TO BROTHER AND SISTER CHIMPS AND LEARN FROM THEM SURVIVAL TRICKS IN A "THE WAY IT'S S'POSED TO BE" MANNER. BUT THEIR INGENUITY AND CREATIVITY ARE LOST. THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS ON THEIR OWN. <u>THE CHIMP MOTHER'S ORBIT OF BENEVOLENT PROTECTION, THEN, SEEMS TO BE THE ORIGINAL ARENA, ERIKSON'S "LEEWAY WITHIN LIMITS."</u>

PLAY, WE MAINTAIN, IS EVERY BIT AS IMPORTANT AS IS BREATHING. IT IS A BIOLOGICAL NECESSITY. BUT CAN WE BE SURE THAT THIS IS SO? IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE THAT PLAY IS ESSENTIAL FOR SURVIVAL? I THINK THERE IS. WE HAVE WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO CALL A <u>POWERFUL NEGATIVE EVIDENCE</u>. WE MEAN BY THIS THAT CHILDREN WHO DO NOT HAVE A CHANCE

TO PLAY SIMPLY DIE OR BECOME PERMANENTLY RETARDED. OUR PRIME CASE IN POINT IS THE HOSPITALISM STUDY BY RENÉ SPITZ AND HIS TEAM, WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO SUMMARIZE HERE.

BEFORE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY PEOPLE SUDDENLY WOKE UP TO THE FACT THAT INFANTS WHO HAD BEEN PLACED IN ORPHANAGES ALMOST INVARIABLY DEVELOPED SEVERE MENTAL DISORDERS, SUCH AS PSYCHOSIS OR FEEBLEMINDEDNESS. THE QUESTION NATURALLY AROSE WHAT THE NOXIOUS FACTORS MIGHT BE IN INSTITUTIONAL PLACEMENT. COULD IT BE POOR FOOD? INSUFFICIENT MEDICAL CARE? POOR HOUSING? A RESEARCH TEAM UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF RENÉ SPITZ INVESTIGATED THE EERIE PHENOMENON SYSTEMATICALLY. FOR THIS PURPOSE THEY COMPARED CHILDREN IN TWO SUCH ORPHANAGES IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE AND NAMED THEM "FOUNDLING HOME" AND "NURSERY," RESPECTIVELY.

THE TEAM WAS FIRST OF ALL IMPRESSED THAT MOST OF THE CHILDREN IN NURSERY HAD, BY THE END OF THEIR FIRST YEAR, DEVELOPED STEADILY IN KEEPING WITH THEIR AGES. THEIR AVERAGE DEVELOPMENTAL QUOTIENT (SIMILAR TO AN INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT) INCREASED FROM 101.5 TO 105. THEY WERE LIVELY, HEALTHY, HAD BIG APPETITES, AND ENJOYED PEOPLE. THEY TALKED AND MOVED ABOUT ACTIVELY; THEY WERE CURIOUS, AND THEY WERE "A HANDFUL."

THE CHILDREN OF FOUNDLINGS HOME WERE QUITE DIFFERENT. THEY DETERIORATED UNDER THE VERY EYES OF THEIR CARETAKERS, SO THAT THEIR ~~AVERAGE AND~~ ORIGINALLY VERY HIGH AVERAGE DEVELOPMENTAL QUOTIENT DECREASED FROM 124 TO 72. BY THE TIME THEY WERE TWO YEARS OLD THEY WERE LIKE TEN-MONTH-OLD INFANTS, OR IMBECILES. THEY COULD NOT WALK OR TALK, AND HARDLY ANY OF THEM COULD EAT BY THEMSELVES. THEY WERE NOT TOILET-TRAINED, AND, WORST OF ALL, THEY ACTED

COMPLETELY UNINTERESTED IN OR DISTRESSED BY THE SIGHT OF ANY GROWNUP. FOUNDLINGS HOME YOUNGSTERS WERE ALSO EXTREMELY SUSCEPTIBLE TO ILLNESS. DURING A MEASLES EPIDEMIC, FOR EXAMPLE, TWENTY-THREE OUT OF EIGHTY-EIGHT CHILDREN DIED--A RATE MUCH HIGHER THAN FOR THE WHOLE CHILD POPULATION.

SUCH A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHILDREN OF FOUNDLINGS HOME AND THOSE OF NURSERY WOULD MAKE ONE WONDER ABOUT THE GENETIC ENDOWMENT OF FOUNDLINGS HOME CHILDREN. BUT IN FACT IT WAS THE NURSERY CHILDREN WHO WERE GENETICALLY INFERIOR, FOR NURSERY WAS THE CHILDREN'S WARD OF A FEMALE PENITENTIARY. THE MOTHERS WERE, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, YOUNG, DELINQUENT, POVERTY-STRICKEN GIRLS, PROSTITUTES; MANY OF THEM WERE SICK AND MANY MENTALLY RETARDED. YET THEIR LITTLE BABIES THRIVED. THE STEADILY DETERIORATING BABIES OF FOUNDLINGS HOME CAME FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS--SOME BETTER, SOME WORSE--BUT THE AVERAGE HEREDITARY ENDOWMENT WAS FAR BETTER THAN THAT OF THE CHILDREN IN NURSERY. THE RESEARCH TEAM FOUND THAT THE PLANT, THE FOOD, AND ABOVE ALL THE MEDICAL CARE WAS EXCELLENT IN BOTH INSTITUTIONS.

THE DECISIVE DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER, WERE THE FOLLOWING ONES: NURSERY CHILDREN EACH HAD THEIR OWN BED, BUT THEY SHARED A ROOM. THUS THEY WERE ALWAYS IN THE COMFORTABLE PRESENCE OF OTHER CHILDREN, WHOM THEY SAW AND HEARD AND WITH WHOM THEY CHATTED IN THEIR PRE-VERBAL WAY. IT WAS ONE CONTINUAL TEA PARTY. IN ADDITION, THERE WAS LOTS FOR THEM TO SEE, TREES OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS, HOUSEHOLD EQUIPMENT, PEOPLE, AND SOON THEY WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE REGULAR APPEARANCE OF THEIR MOTHERS, WHO CAME AT INTERVALS TO FEED AND BATHE AND DIAPER AND PLAY WITH THEIR BABIES. SUCH VISITS

INTERRUPTED THE TEDIUM OF PRISON LIFE FOR THE YOUNG MOTHERS, AS MUCH AS THEY WERE EXCITING FOR THE BABIES. THEY BOTH LOVED THEIR TIME TOGETHER. FURTHERMORE, THE NURSERY BABIES HAD TOYS AT THEIR DISPOSAL AND USED THEM IN AN ANIMATED WAY.

NOT SO THE FOUNDLINGS HOME CHILDREN. THEY LIVED A VERY SANITARY LIFE, WITH CLEAN SHEETS HUNG OVER THEIR CRIBS. NO GERMS, NO SIGHTS, NO SOUNDS, ALMOST NO HUMAN CONTACT. IT WAS A STERILE LIFE IN EVERY SENSE. TRUE, THEY HAD NURSES LOOKING AFTER THEM, INSTEAD OF YOUNG, SICK, INFERIOR MOTHERS. BUT THE FOUNDLINGS HOME KIDS EACH HAD MERELY ONE-EIGHTH OF A NURSE AT THEIR DISPOSAL--SINCE EACH NURSE WAS IN CHARGE OF EIGHT BABIES. ANYBODY WHO HAS EVER TAKEN CARE OF INFANTS KNOWS THAT TWO OF THEM KEEP YOU VERY BUSY. ANYTHING BEYOND THAT KEEPS YOU GOING AT A BREATHTAKING, EXHAUSTING PACE WHICH LEAVES YOU NO TIME EVEN FOR AN EXTRA GLANCE OR SMILE--LEAVE ALONE TIME FOR HUGGING, CUDDLING, COMFORTING, TALKING. FOUNDLINGS HOME KIDS HAD ALL THE FOOD AND SOAP AND LYSOL. WHAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE WAS MOTHERS AND TOYS: NOTHING TO STIMULATE PLAY (SKIN AND ENDOCRINE CHANGES).

LEST WE BE MISUNDERSTOOD, LET US STATE RIGHT AWAY THAT THE MIRACLE OF EGO DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT OCCUR BECAUSE THERE ARE PLAY-THINGS LIKE CRADLE GYMS AND LEGGOS, TEDDYBEARS AND CANDYLAND GAMES IN THIS WORLD. THERE IS NO ITEM IN THE CATALOGUE OF F. A. O. SCHWARZ OR SEARS ROEBUCK THAT CAN TRIGGER AN INNATE RELEASE MECHANISM. IT TAKES THE MOTHER'S INTERPLAY WITH THE BABY. SHE INITIATES LITTLE GAMES OF SMILING, HIDING, TALKING, CUDDLING, AND HANDLING THINGS--UNTIL SHE HAS AWAKENED THE CHILD'S LUST FOR LIFE; UNTIL HE FEELS: "I WANT TO TOUCH MOM'S FACE, AND THE FLUFFY BUNNY

AND THE STICKY OATMEAL. I WANT TO COO AND GURGLE LIKE SHE DOES, I WANT TO FIT A SMALL CUBE INTO A BIGGER ONE, ETC., ETC. I WANT TO LEAVE MY IMPRINT ON MY ENVIRONMENT."

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURE AS WELL AS AN INDIVIDUAL, THEN, HINGES ON INTERPLAY. WITHOUT IT OUR CIVILIZATION WOULD NOT HAVE CHANGED. WE WOULD ALL STILL BE "FLINTSTONES." YOU MIGHT HAVE PREFERRED THIS, BUT IT HAS CLEARLY NOT BEEN OUR FATE. INSTEAD, OUR FATE HAS BECOME TO PLAY AND THEREBY TO MASTER THE WORLD. PERHAPS PLAY CAN EVEN HELP US TO BECOME MORE ADEPT IN MASTERING OURSELVES, ESPECIALLY OUR DESTRUCTIVENESS, AND THEREBY ENSURE THE SURVIVAL NOT ONLY OF EACH ONE OF US, BUT OF THE ENTIRE SPECIES AS WELL.

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APRIL 1979